



VAGABOND

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Hobo Advice Trainhopping 101: Hobo Lingo

(self.vagabond)

submitted 2 months ago * by [huckstah](#)

[Trainhopper](#) / [Hitchhiker](#)

- **Bull** - Railroad police/security.
- **Busking** - Playing music for money while traveling.
- **Cadillac Car** - Riding in the unit/locomotive of the train.
- **Catching Out** - Jumping on a train to leave.
- **Catch on the Fly** - Catching a train while its moving.
- **Crew Change** - Place where a train stops and swaps out conductors and engineers.
- **Crusties** - A more extremist form of gutterpunk, intentionally not using hygiene,

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An online community created by vagabonds, for vagabonds:

and usually identified by tons of tattoo's, piercings, dirty clothes, and the smell of a dogs ass.

- **Dirty Kids** - Usually a laid-back form of crusties or gutterpunks, no sense of hygiene, traveling by any means necessary, with no specific goals or jobs attached to their destination.
- **DPU** - Locomotives that are located in the middle or the rear of the train.
- **Feed** - free food for homeless people and travelers, usually donated by a local church or non-profit organization.
- **Flying Sign** - Holding a sign for money or food at an intersection, median, or entrance of a store.
- **Foamers** - Railroad fans (railfans) that are obsessed with freight train culture.
- **Grainer Car** - A train car used for carrying grain, often with porches good for riding.
- **Gondola** - a train car typically used to haul trash such as scrap metal, construction debris, etc.
- **Greenhorns** - Rail riders that are inexperienced with hopping freight trains.
- **Ground-score** - Finding something valuable

Vagabonds, Hobos, Hitchhikers, Trainhoppers, Squatters, Rubbertramps, Backpackers, and more.

Feel free to share stories and pictures about your adventures on the road, or share advice and tips with greenhorns and lurkers!

Maps for Vagabonds

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Trainhopping: Tips and Advice

Meta

on the sidewalk or ground (cigarette, jewelry, money, food, etc)

- **Gutterpunk** - A hybrid of punks and anarchists that ride trains as a symbol of rebellion from modern culture.
- **Highballin'** - Train is given full clearance and is allowed to maintain or increase speed through a high traffic area; a train given priority clearance to depart yard with high speed.
- **Homeguard/Homebum** - A hobo or bum that has stayed in one camp for a long period of time and has no plans to travel onward to a new place.
- **Hop Out** - The place in town where it's easy to catch a train or get off a train.
- **Hotshot** - High-priority train that is going a long distance with fewer stops than other trains.
- **Intermodal** - A train carrying cargo stacks that are usually going long distances.
- **Jungle** - Site where trainhoppers usually camp and/or hangout and watch for trains.
- **Kick-down** - Throwing in a few dollars for the group cause of buying something, usually beer, tobacco, food, or drugs.

a community for 4 years



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- **Main-line** - The priority rail(s) running through a train yard that are designated for departing trains.
- **Oogles** - Rail riders that are either inexperienced or simply stupid, usually in the form of gutter-punks, crusties, or greenhorns (rookies).
- **Piggyback Car** - A train car that is carrying semi-truck trailers.
- **Pushers** - Units/locomotives on the rear of a train.
- **Side-lined/Sided-out** - When your train has to stop on a side-track to allow a higher priority train to pass through.
- **Shit Tickets** - Any form of paper that can be used as toilet tissue, usually napkins or police citation tickets.
- **Spange** - Asking people for spare change.
- **Suicide Car** - Riding dangerously on a train car that has no solid floor or safe place to sit/stand.
- **Trustafarian** - Rich kid with money, pretending to live an authentic vagabond lifestyle.
- **Unit** - Train locomotive/engine.
- **Yard** - The location (train-yard) in a town

where all the trains stop to switch cars,
refuel, switch tracks, change crews,
disassemble cars, add cars, and check for
inspection.

20 comments share

All 20 Comments

sorted by: **best** ▼



[–] **unclepg** 26 points 2 months ago

Is there a name, yet, for those of us from [/r/EDC](#) who have become interested in this lifestyle and are watching from our computers in our cubicles, thinking "wow, I'd like to do that someday!"??

[permalink](#)



[–] **superhobofancy** 13 points 2 months ago

What's keeping you from doing it?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **CXR1037** 31 points 2 months ago

Seriously!

People think it's this lifelong commitment. I worked in an office 40 hours a week and would hop trains on the weekends. They can only go 8-10 hours/2-300 miles in any direction before stopping to change crews. If you have the financial means it's totally reasonable to ride a district, get off, and Amtrak/Greyhound back.

Unless you live somewhere with no rail lines. :(

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **huckstah** [Trainhopper / Hitchhiker](#) **S** 31 points 2 months ago

^ That comment should almost be a sticky for this subreddit.

People assume this is a lifestyle that they will get trapped into and never escape, which is just completely untrue.

If you're already working, save up some money, buy some gear, and hit the road/rails/whatever-you-prefer.

Do it for a weekend. Do it for a week. Do it for 6 months, whatever. Take a greyhound/amtrak/hitchhike back home if you don't like it. You don't have to quit your current life and just dive-in permanently. Think it out, prepare, mentally prepare, research, and then experiment with it and determine if it's something you'd like to do long-term.

You'll either learn to love the lifestyle, or you'll go back to your cubicle. Hell, maybe you'll find a mix of both and just be a vagabond for a few days or weeks each year on your vacation time.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **unclepg** 9 points 2 months ago

How does one learn best the trains, their timetables, destinations, stops along the way, etc? I saw a book in your EDC, [/u/huckstah](#), that seemed to be this sort of resource. Can the info be found online, as well?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **huckstah** Trainhopper / Hitchhiker S 8 points 2 months ago

Check the sidebar. There are links to railroad maps ;)

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **Lupo_Bi-Wan_Kenobi** 6 points 2 months ago

Just to clarify that a little bit~ Crews can work up to 12 hours on duty, at that point they can remain on the clock but no longer are allowed to turn a wheel. You can't operate beyond 12 hours, but you can definitely be put in siding after siding and end up only half way to the next terminal before the train is being tied down and left there possibly.

So I'd suggest always factoring in those variables when you have a work schedule to return to soon. It's very possible to sit on an unmanned train for upwards of 24 hours in the middle of nowhere just hoping your luck changes soon. Sometimes there's major track work ahead and that train won't be able to travel any further until it's complete.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **unclepg** 3 points 2 months ago

Yeah! See??? NOT so easy, is it! ;P

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **Lupo_Bi-Wan_Kenobi** 3 points 2 months ago

Well, too be fair~ It's a bit more likely to go the way [/u/CXR1037](#) has outlined. If you got off work on a Friday afternoon and hit the jungle by sunset, it's pretty likely you'll find a train going somewhere that you can catch and manage to make your way back by Sunday evening. Railroads don't exactly *prefer* to pay crews overtime once they're no longer able to operate trains, so generally they aim to avoid letting things go as I outlined about.

It *can* happen though, so it's something to consider. That's why I felt I should mention it. Personally, I'd rather run some risks in life than steadily dream of something that I'd never end up doing based on fear. Do shit every now and then that makes you feel **alive**, fuck a cubicle for life! You're not gonna do it at 65, you'll be adopting fears of breaking a hip, this this and that by then. I just think it's a lot better to regret having done something in your life(that may not work out as perfectly as you hoped it would) rather than regretting not having done something you've always wanted to do.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **CXR1037** 2 points 2 months ago

Yeah you're definitely right. I've been totally fucked over before on trains (took me ten hours to go fifteen miles once). However, I think I've been burned about 1% of my travels, and most of that was due to not knowing the line or the train.

For example, if you can figure out you're going for a train that goes from City 1 to City 2, try to look it up or talk to railfans and see if that train works anywhere. You don't want to get set out in a factory somewhere!

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **huckstah** Trainhopper / Hitchhiker S 7 points 2 months ago

I once woke up on the porch of a grainer only to discover that the rest of the train

disconnected 2 cars ahead of mine, and took off without me. Talk about getting burned. I was pissed. It left me high and dry in Sidney Nebraska, and the cops are really agro about trainhopping, and kicked me out of the county.

Also, it was pretty bad when I ended up getting dropped off at a coal factory 15 miles outside of Amarillo. Got kicked off at 4am, freezing fucking cold, no place for shelter, ran out of cigarettes, it was one of the worst days I've ever had. After walking like 5 miles with a 60 pound pack, fingers numb from the cold, a black farmer finally picked me up and took me to a mcdonalds and bought me breakfast.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[–] **CXR1037** 3 points 2 months ago

Ha, been there! I think we all have. I think my single worst ride was on an otherwise clockwork train.

We were on the MWCRVB on a routine catch up to Roseville and the train busted in half. No big deal, I figured, they'll string it back together and we'll be on our way in no time. I turned on my scanner and hear the dreaded "DPU COMM ERROR". The conductor goes back, they release the brakes, then plug it, disconnect/reconnect a bunch of stuff...nothing. They do this over and over. This is about 15 miles outside of Colton, and it's been about three hours. So they hang out another few hours and mechanics show up. They can't get it to work. It's been about six hours since catching out. They call for manned helpers to get them in a hole (we -- as in our boxcar -- had stopped right on a switch, so they had to move).

Helpers showed up and shoved us up Cajon. My girlfriend and I woke up freezing cold (underprepared because I wasn't prepared for getting stuck in Cajon!) expecting to see Tehachapi and instead saw CP Canyon -- only another ten miles or so up the road. We went back to the DPU and cranked the heater and fell asleep again. Woke up around 8AM the next morning. Hung out another couple hours, then a UP worker popped in and told us they were bringing the manned helpers

back to shove it into a different siding and they were going to leave it there. We bailed and went home.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[+] *[deleted] 27 days ago (1 child)*



[−] **Byxit** 1 point 1 month ago

Wannabhobo

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[−] **Strange_love72** 4 points 1 month ago

Hey there Huckstah. I'm finishing up my last year of college and will graduate with a bachelor's degree. I've always been interested in traveling, but I want to save up a lot of money before I go instead of just hitting the road/rail. Would I be relegated to being a trustafarian if I'm not struggling so to speak as far as money is concerned? I suppose I could drive/fly where I want to go, but hopping trains seems like much more of an adventure.

[permalink](#)



[−] **Lupo_Bi-Wan_Kenobi** 3 points 2 months ago

As far as car types, it seems like there's an effort to list the ones which can be ridden. Gondolas might not be a bad add, if you're open to suggestions.

[permalink](#)



[−] **huckstah** **Trainhopper / Hitchhiker** **S** 5 points 2 months ago

Can't believe I forgot about to add the Gondo's to the list. I love riding them, but I've gotten a shitload of dust and shit in my mouth and eyes from the wind. I refuse to ride those fuckers without a bandana or sunglasses.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[−] **Lupo_Bi-Wan_Kenobi** 1 point 2 months ago

Oh for sure, I wouldn't say they're the most hygienic option.. but they'll carry you.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[−] **CXR1037** 2 points 2 months ago

I've never heard Cadillacs used to describe units. Cadillacs are usually covered hoppers with especially concealed porches.

I haven't heard side lined either. "Sided" or "sided out" is more popular, at least out here.

[permalink](#)



[–] **Goremageddon** 2 points 1 month ago

Lol at "trustafarian". I live in Austin, TX, we have a lot of what we call "crustfundrs" here. Kids living the gutterpunk/crusty "lifestyle" simply because they're lazy dipshits and have a steady income from their rich mommies and daddies.

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